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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 SSO-00 IO-10 /074 W
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R 232034Z JUN 75
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0645
INFO AMEMBASSY LISBON
AMEMBASSY MADRID
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
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AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG
AMEMBASSY OSLO
AMEMBASSY ROME
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AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
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AMCONSUL BORDEAUX
AMCONSUL LYON
AMCONSUL MARSEILLE
AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE
AMCONSUL NICE
AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 16307

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR PINT FR PO
SUBJECT: PORTUGUESE DEVELOPMENTS AND FRENCH INTERNAL
POLITICS

SUMMARY: EVENTS IN PORTUGAL, ESPECIALLY THE REPUBLICA
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AFFAIR, ARE RECEIVING HEAVY MEDIA PLAY IN FRANCE. SOC-

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IALIST PARTY LEADER FRANCOIS MITTERRAND HAS PUT HIS PARTY ON RECORD IN DEFENSE OF THE REPUBLICA, PROCLAIMING THAT THE MATTER POSES A FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION OF ANTI-TOTALITARIANISM. THE COMMUNISTS ARE TAKING A STALINIST LINE TOWARD PORTUGAL DESPITE THE DANGER FOR ITS IMAGE AND ITS ALLIANCE WITH THE SOCIALISTS. THE MAJORITY COALITION IS NATURALLY DOING ITS BEST TO PLAY ON TRADITIONAL FRENCH FEARS OF COMMUNIST DICTATORSHIP. SO FAR, WE DO NOT SEE FRANCE GETTING EXCITED OVER PORTUGAL, NOTWITHSTANDING ALL THE MEDIA EXPOSURE, BUT A TOTALITARIAN SOLUTION IN LISBON CAN ONLY HURT THE UNITED LEFT'S IMAGE AS A DEMOCRATIC ALTERNATIVE IN FRANCE. END SUMMARY.

1. THE PUBLICATION OF A SPECIAL ISSUE OF REPUBLICA ON JUNE 23 BY THE NEWSPAPER QUOTIDIEN DE PARIS (SEPTEL) PROVIDES A CONVENIENT POINT OF DEPARTURE FOR THE DISCUSSION OF THE OVERALL IMPACT OF PORTUGUESE DEVELOPMENTS ON THE FRENCH INTERNAL POLITICAL SCENE. CERTAINLY, THE DAILY AND WEEKLY PRESS, AS WELL AS TV AND RADIO, HAVE KEPT PORTUGAL ON THE FRONT PAGES FOR MONTHS, WITH THE REPUBLICA AFFAIR SERVING AS THE MOST DRAMATIC ELEMENT. THE POLITICAL PARTIES AND THE INTELLECTUAL CLASS HAVE FOUND IT NECESSARY TO MAKE PUBLIC PRONOUNCEMENTS ON PORTUGAL WHICH IN TURN HAVE STIMULATED ADDITIONAL MEDIA ATTENTION. THE BIG QUESTION, OF COURSE, IS TO WHAT EXTENT PORTUGAL IS AFFECTING POLITICAL DYNAMICS IN FRANCE, AND IF THE IMPACT IS LIKELY TO BE SIGNIFICANT, HOW VARIOUS ELEMENTS ARE ADJUSTING TO THIS NEW PHENOMENON.

2. THE SOCIALISTS -- SOCIALIST PARTY FIRST SECRETARY FRANCOIS MITTERRAND, WHO HAS BEEN CLOSELY LINKED TO HIS PORTUGUESE COUNTERPART MARIO SOARES FOR SOME TIME, THREW THE ENTIRE WEIGHT OF HIS PARTY BEHIND THE PORTUGUESE SOCIALISTS THREE WEEKS AGO. THIS TOOK THE FORM OF AN ARTICLE IN THE SOCIALIST PARTY WEEKLY "UNITE" WHICH ATTACKED BOTH THE PORTUGUESE AND FRENCH COMMUNIST PARTIES. THE LATTER WAS DUBBED HYPOCRITICAL FOR SUPPORTING ONE FORM OF LIBERTY IN FRANCE AND A MORE AUTHORITARIAN CONCEPT IN PORTUGAL. TWO DAYS LATER (MAY 31), MITTERRAND FOLLOWED UP BY ARGUING SOARES' CASE BEFORE THE LEADERS OF SOUTH-

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ERN EUROPE'S SOCIALIST PARTIES ASSEMBLED AT THE MITTERRAND ESTATE IN SOUTHERN FRANCE.

3. APART FROM THE SIMPLE FACT THAT MITTERRAND DEEPLY BELIEVES IN THE CAUSE OF DEMOCRATIC PLURALISM IN PORTUGAL, HE HAS NO OTHER POLITICAL CHOICE BUT TO SUPPORT SOARES AND DEMOCRATIC FRENCH VOTERS AS AN ANTI-TOTALITARIAN. SINCE 1972 MITTERRAND HAS BEEN TRYING TO CONVINCE FRENCH

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VOTERS THAT THE COMMUNIST PARTY CAN BE A RELIABLE ALLY
WHEN IT IS TEAMED WITH (AND THEREFORE IMPLICITLY CONTROLLED
BY A MORE POPULAR
ELECTORALLY STRONGER SOCIALIST PARTY. WHEN DEMOCRATIC
FREEDOMS ARE THREATENED ANYWHERE, THEREFORE, MITTERRAND
MUST TAKE A HARSH LINE WITH THE FRENCH COMMUNISTS IF
THEY SHOW SUPPORT FOR TOTALITARIAN SOLUTIONS, AS THEY
HAVE DONE SO OBVIOUSLY WITH RESPECT TO PORTUGAL. THIS
GAME MUST BE PLAYED VERY DELICATELY, HOWEVER, BECAUSE
THE SOCIALISTS CANNOT HOPE TO WIN AN EVENTUAL MAJORITY
IN PARLIAMENT WITHOUT THE HARD-CORE COMMUNIST VOTE. THE
MORE THE FRENCH SOCIALIST VOTER IS INFORMED THAT THE
FRENCH COMMUNIST LEOPARD HAS NOT CHANGED HIS SPOTS, THE

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INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 SSO-00 IO-10 /074 W
---------- 014322
R 232106Z JUN 75
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
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INFO AMEMBASSY LISBON
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 PARIS 16307

GREATER WILL BE THE PRESSURE FROM SOCIALIST MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT TO BREAK UP THE UNION OF THE LEFT. INDEED, THERE ARE SIGNS THAT WHILE SOCIALIST DEPUTIES CONTINUE TO SUPPORT MITTERRAND'S STAND ON PORTUGUESE QUESTIONS, CONFIDENTIAL

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THERE IS A LATENT FEAR THAT SUCH SUPPORT COULD BRING VOTERS WHOM THE DEPUTIES SUSPECT OF REASONING BY ANALOGY TO QUESTION THE PS/PCF ALLIANCE OR, PERHAPS WORSE, THE WISDOM OF MITTERRAND'S LEADERSHIP OF THE PS.

4. THE COMMUNIST PARTY -- TRIUMPH OF THE HARDLINERS: THE COMMUNIST PARTY LASHED OUT AT MITTERRAND'S CRITICISM OF ITS ATTITUDE TOWARD REPUBLICA AND PORTUGAL IN GENERAL. ITS INITIAL REACTION WAS CUTTING AND SARCASTIC, BUT IT TOOK NONE OF THE ACTIONS WHICH MIGHT HAVE LED TO A BREAK IN THE UNITED LEFT: IT DID NOT CANCEL OUT OF THE UNITED LEFT SUMMIT MEETING JUNE 29 (PARIS 16162); IT DID NOT REFUSE PS SUPPORT IN THE LE HAVRE BY-ELECTION; AND IT DID NOT CONTINUE THE ATTACKS ON THE SOCIALISTS BEYOND THE ALMOST MANDATORY TWO DAYS. THE PCF IS AWARE THAT PORTUGUESE COMMUNIST EXCESSES CAN COST THE UNITED LEFT VOTES, BUT WITH NO MAJOR ELECTIONS SCHEDULED FOR THE NEAR FUTURE IT HAS THUS FAR BEEN CONTENT TO HAVE AN OCCASION TO PROVE ITS REVOLUTIONARY ZEAL THROUGH ITS SUPPORT FOR THE PCP. HOWEVER, THERE ARE SOME SIGNS THAT THIS "HARD" ATTITUDE MAY BE SOFTENING (SEE SEPTEL). IF SO, THE UNION OF THE LEFT WOULD MARGINALLY BENEFIT FROM THE LULL IN THE PS/PCF QUARREL.

5. REACTION IN THE GISCARDIAN MAJORITY -- ALL PARTIES IN THE PRESIDENTIAL MAJORITY ARE NATURALLY TRYING TO TAKE FULL ADVANTAGE OF PORTUGUESE DEVELOPMENTS, AND ESPECIALLY THE REPUBLICA AFFAIR, TO DEMONSTRATE THAT ANY COOPERATION WITH COMMUNIST PARTIES IN THE FREE WORLD IS INEVITABLY FATAL TO DEMOCRACY. DEGAULLE DID THIS SUCCESSFULLY THROUGHOUT HIS PRESIDENCY, BUT DETENTE AND GISCARD'S ESPECIALLY WARM ATTITUDE TOWARD THE SOVIETS HAVE ENHANCED COMMUNIST RESPECTABILITY IN FRANCE. THE REPUBLICA AFFAIR

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WAS TAILOR-MADE FOR CHIRAC, PONIATOWSKI AND OTHERS WHO ARE LOOKING FOR WAYS TO KEEP STIMULATING THE AVERAGE FRENCHMAN'S FEAR OF COMMUNISM AS AN ALIEN AND DANGEROUS IDEOLOGY. THIS LINE WAS WELL ILLUSTRATED BY ALBIN CHALANDON AT THE UDR CONVENTION IN NICE ON JUNE 14 WHEN HE CALLED THE SOCIALIST PARTY "OUR MOST DANGEROUS ADVERSARY" BECAUSE IT CANNOT SUCCEED EXCEPT AS "THE HOSTAGE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY."
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6. THE IMPACT ON THE FRENCH ELECTORATE: THERE HAVE BEEN VERY FEW PUBLIC MANIFESTATIONS IN SUPPORT OF LIBERTY IN PORTUGAL, THE HEAVY MEDIA COVERAGE NOTWITHSTANDING. ALTHOUGH TEN PERCENT OF ALL PORTUGUESE LIVE IN FRANCE, PORTUGAL TENDS TO BE A SOMEWHAT REMOTE, ALMOST AFRICAN UNDERDEVELOPED COUNTRY TO THE AVERAGE FRENCHMAN. IT WILL THEREFORE BE HARD TO GET HIM EXCITED ABOUT EVENTS THERE. THE AMOUNT OF POLITICAL FALLOUT IN FRANCE WILL DEPEND ON THE EXACT SCENARIO OF THE FINAL OUTCOME IN PORTUGAL. IF COMMUNIST TOTALITARIANISM SUCCEEDS IN PORTUGAL, AND IF THE FRENCH COMMUNISTS DO NOT BACK AWAY FROM THEIR UNQUALIFIED SUPPORT FOR THEIR PORTUGUESE COMRADES, THE UNITED LEFT COULD SUFFER MARGINAL LOSSES DESPITE MITTERRAND'S DEFENSE OF LIBERTY.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL STABILITY, PRESS COMMENTS, POLITICAL SITUATION, POLITICAL PARTIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 23 JUN 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: greeneet
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975PARIS16307
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750218-0380
From: PARIS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750624/aaaaawcb.tel
Line Count: 253
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: greeneet
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 16 APR 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <16 APR 2003 by ElyME>; APPROVED <03 OCT 2003 by greeneet>
Review Markings:

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Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PORTUGUESE DEVELOPMENTS AND FRENCH INTERNAL POLITICS
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, FR, PO
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006